

for Weisberg

To... Roffman (cc Weisberg)

13 April 1970

Dear Howard:

I now have a bit of time and can answer neglected mail or clarify things that I may have answered imperfectly before. This will cover some, but not all, of your recent mail.

Why I came to Canada: No political reasons at all for coming here. There was a good job and an environment that suited me-- that's about it. I came here in Aug 1965, at a time when I believed that the WR was essentially correct in its conclusions. Taking my cue from the press, I was disdainful of critics-- satisfied to scorn them without having read them. My political views are very different now ~~from~~ from what they were when I came to Canada. We can talk of this at some other time when I have leisure. Right now it is not important.

JFK back measurements (your memo): The knowledge that back wound is lower than front wound does not necessarily imply that situation is incompatible with the notion of shooter above and behind. You imply this in your last sentence. Without the least subscribing to the notion that a bullet passed from back to front, I want you to know that you can not argue on a categorical basis by citing the angle through the body-- not that alone, anyway. Once a bullet enters flesh its trajectory is not predictable, and may be very erratic, even without striking bone. I simply do not ~~use~~ think it is a proper basis for argument, and I never use it. An upward trajectory in a body would strongly imply a shot from below, but it does not necessarily imply that.

'pre-autopsy' examination: I suggest that you continue collecting references on this. Its ultimate use may not be immediately evident, but I think that potentially it might have some importance-- especially if more is discovered bearing on the possibility that a bullet was removed from the back. If a bullet did penetrate a short distance it might even have worked itself back far enough to be seen in the wound, and could be pulled out with fingertips. Anyway, I think it worthwhile to pick up and save all references bearing on possibility that bullet was taken from back before X-rays were made.

JFK back wound: I discount possibility of bullet entering at sharp rifhr angle-- unless medical record on the superficial characteristics of the wound are false. Bullet entering at sharp right angle would cause elongated wound with a sideways direction of the axis of the wound. As I recall, nothing like that is implied in the records. Moreover, there would be more singeing of skin on the right side of the hole than on the left. Medical records of JFK wound say singeing was on the upper margin of the wound, which strongly implies a shot from above and more or less directly behind.

Blood/flesh in 399 base: Excellent suggestion in your 27 Feb letter-- that blood or flesh may be in ~~any~~ cracks of 399 base if it passed into a body. Such stuff would indeed adhere where you say, and would remain unless bullet were cleaned with a blood solvent. I doubt, however, that they would be discernible even in a color photo.

Bullets fired into cotton: Your statement "one of the rounds (that Frazier fired into cotton) is actually twisted along its long axis" is not clear to me. This refers to your letter of 27 Feb. I do not think any mutilation possible. If you care to pursue this, explain what you mean. What you describe may be something quite natural and expected.

Blank autopsy films: For myself I do not explain this in terms of accident in developing films or any other type of accident or deficiency. I think exposed film was switched for the two rolls that showed things the authorities did not want to see, or did not want others to see.

6.5 mm fragment in skull near entrance wound: continue fooling with this as you are doing. It overlaps somewhat a thing that I am working on, but for a while we can go at it independently. When I am able to settle some questions that presently I cannot answer I'll tell you more. What I am doing may amount to nothing, but if it does pan out, then what you are doing will be relevant. I had thought of the considerations that you mention, although they are secondary to the main thrust of what I am after. More later.

Your hypothetical question re tiny mass of tiny fragments near (on?) spine (letter of 24 Mar): The conditions that you stipulate are nonsensical, and no one can render an appropriate guess as to what the described circumstances mean. If ~~you~~ what you stipulate bears any relationship to anything true, then it is but a small part of the truth, and not capable of being interpreted except in light of what is missing-- by that I mean it is impossible to interpret the situation that you describe.

Fragmentation of the sort that you describe necessarily implies more fragmentation than you describe-- and it implies more widely distributed fragmentation. If you had sent me a picture of a big toe and asked what it is, I would say it is a big toe, and let it go at that. I can't tell you what the person looks like, though. The existence of the toe implies the foot, ~~the~~ etc., but no more can be said. Even that analogy is not good, for a picture of a toe makes sense. Your description does not. It's like having a page that has a top but no bottom, a front but no back, a left side but not a right-- incomprehensible.

Given only the info that you provide, and supposing that that info describes the whole situation, I could say that someone took a mouthful of dust-size lead particles and gently blew them into the wound ~~xxx~~ through a very thin straw. That is the kind of sense that your stipulations demand.

Chest incisions/Humes/ Speceter: Your memo on this seems sound. I cannot understand the "why" of the shenanigans. I think it unlikely that JFK was struck by a bullet in the chest. There is no reference to holes in the shirt front except for the slits (this is not to say, however, that there was no such hole). More important, I think, is absence of reference to chest wound in testimonies of Parkland docs and nurses. JFK was washed before he left Parkland, and I believe a chest wound would have been seen.

JFK hand: I think it unlikely that JFK received hand wound, at least not a great wound of the palm that you indicate (supposing varminster entered back of hand). Right hand was seen by Mrs K who is reported to have placed a ring on his finger. Also I think clenching of fist as seen in Zapruder would be difficult to perform if there was a bad wound to the hand.

Considering ~~xxxxxx~~ avoidance of pix and X-rays of hands, I think it worth watching that area, but presently there is so little info that almost nothing can be said with even moderate assurance.

I find nothing inconsistent with JFK having been hit in the front neck by pristine varminster\$. So far everything seems to indicate that, and nothing to vitiate it.

Consider the front-neck wound in terms of Zapruder: first shot was fired before Z195; JFK shows response to being hit before Z200; Bennett reports he saw JFK hit in the back (this had to be after Z202, for B was not looking at JFK in Z202, but was turning toward him). So he was wounded before Z200, ~~xxxx~~ but not in the back. Where, then? The only other wounds we know of are in the head and front-neck. If you can reasonably exclude a head hit before Z200 (as I think you can), then that leaves only the front-neck unaccounted for. My notion is that the first shot was fired sometime between Z185 and 195 and that that shot hit JFK in the front of the neck. An alternative that I would accept is that the first shot (before Z195) missed, and that JFK was hit in the front-neck by the second shot (before Z200). That would make the back hit at least the third shot-- surely not less than a third shot. That is, it could be the second or more, but not the first.

That's it for now. I have been restive lately with assassination stuff, and do not have much ~~tax~~ new to report.

By the way, I now have my own set of the 26 vols. I sold some shooting equipment and finally sprang for the cost.

Lifton: If Lifton has the Hughes and Bell movies, he got them from Newcomb, who got them from Thompson. What a beautiful situation; Newcomb made a great fuss about keeping these things to himself because Thompson gave them in confidence. So he gives copies to Lifton, whom apparently he trust more than he trust others. It's enough to make you climb the wall.

I have not yet answered Lifton's insane letter. I will, though, when I have some time to waste on maniacs.

Enough. Stay in touch.

Still,

Dick

P.S. Your photos from LIFE are enclosed,